



Sacred Heart Catholic Primary School **Whole School Policy on Bullying and Harassment (Students)**

Rationale

Sacred Heart Primary School is a Catholic school sharing the Church's task of spreading the Good News about a loving God. Students, staff and parents are welcomed in a climate where sensitivity and responsibility are developed in a spirit of hope and love. As a school community we all have a responsibility to provide an educational environment that promotes the emotional, psychological, spiritual and physical well being of each and every student. A well organised, open and disciplined environment enables children to grow towards their full potential and therefore aims to eliminate bullying and harassment in all forms.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is the ongoing inappropriate use of power by an individual or group, with intent to injure emotionally or physically.

The nature of bullying behaviour may involve:

- A desire to hurt another person (threatening to hurt)
- Hurtful behaviour (action likely to cause hurt or injury to another person)
- Verbal behaviour (insults, taunts, threats and ridicule either spoken, written or in electronic form such as: email, SMS messaging etc)
- Social behaviour (ignoring, excluding, ostracising)
- Physical behaviour (hitting, punching, throwing objects, stealing)
- Psychological behaviour (stalking, threatening looks, spreading rumours, damaging another's possessions)
- An imbalance and unjust use of power (that is inappropriate and where there is an intention to hurt another individual)
- Sustained and repetitive negative behaviour

Definition of Harassment

Harassment is any unwanted, unwelcome or uninvited behaviour, which makes a person feel humiliated, intimidated or offended.

(Adapted from the 1998 CEO policy, 'Harassment in Schools'). Harassment is a form of Bullying "usually of a non-physical nature, where in the victim is repeatedly treated badly by a stronger person or group because of his or her membership of a social group".

(Rigby, 1996:22)

Examples of harassment may include:

- Racial harassment (when a person is being bullied because he or she belongs to an identifiable racial or ethnic group)
- Sexual harassment (when bullying is directed at persons because they are female or male with specific sexual connotations)"
- Physical appearance harassment (eg: Weight, Height, Glasses etc)
- Gender based harassment (eg: male, female put downs)
- Religious harassment (eg: Muslims, Jews)

It is important to remember that at the root of harassment are prejudiced social beliefs about certain groups of people.... and are often based upon misconceptions or ignorance" (Rigby, 1996:22).

Principles of Bullying Behaviour

- Bullying occurs in all schools and communities
- Each school has a duty of care to all students
- All schools endeavour to provide a supportive environment, which promotes respect for the emotional, physical, psychological and spiritual development of its students.
- Ignoring bullying and harassment behaviour may serve to condone and reinforce the behaviour
- Ownership of the policy by the school community adds to its effectiveness
- A whole school approach is necessary to reduce bullying and harassment with open and honest communication, within the Pastoral Care Policy
- The school responses to bullying and harassment should be reviewed on a regular basis to determine their effectiveness based upon current research

STATEMENT OF SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

Sacred Heart Processes

Sacred Heart Primary School has processes should bullying occur. These processes determine the means by which the policy is translated into action. It requires open and honest communication between all parties (i.e. students, staff and parents).

The processes at Sacred Heart Primary School may include:

- Identification of all parties involved and their relevant needs
- Relevant data collection
- Critical analysis of information
- Appropriate sharing of information on a “need to know” basis
- Appropriate management and storage of sensitive information and confidential documentation
- Collaboration with the school community
- Professional Development of the staff and parents
- Involvement of the school principal, social worker or psychologist
- Identification of roles and responsibilities of students, staff and parents
- Development, publication and translation of the ‘Bullying and Harassment Policy’.
- Ongoing review of individuals and groups involved in a bullying or harassment incident
- Consultation with people with expertise from outside of the school system
- Regular review and evaluation of the bullying and harassment policy

Action Plan 1

When a bullying incident occurs it should be dealt with as soon as possible and personalized to suit individual needs and the severity of the incident. The following steps should be taken in order of priority:

- a) Ensure that the immediate safety of the child who is being bullied is determined
- b) Provide mediation for students involved as soon as possible, by allowing each child the opportunity to address the issue and explain their actions, thoughts, feelings and possible options
- c) At this stage the class teacher of the student who engaged in the bullying should be consulted as to ascertain any past history
- d) Officially notify the school principal of suspected bullying incidents
- e) The students engaged in the bullying incident may receive the appropriate action based upon the schools behaviour management policy
- f) The incident will be reported to the various class teachers, parents and the social worker if deemed necessary
- g) A record of the incident may be kept on the child’s confidential Pastoral Care Card

What to do when Ongoing Bullying has been established

For the process to be effective communication needs to be open and honest between all parties (i.e. students, teachers, parents, social worker and the school principal)

- The student who engaged in the bullying will be given the opportunity to apologise for the offence and SIGN A CONTRACT that they will not repeat an act of bullying AGAINST any student in the future
- An appointment may be made for all parties involved and their class teacher to meet with the school social worker or psychologist at the earliest possible convenience.
- The parents of individual children identified as being involved in bullying behaviour may be contacted, depending on the severity and repetition of the bullying.
- Children need to be able to assert their right to solve the problem without involving parents as long as a safe and supportive environment is provided (Friendly schools project whole school manual pp31/32)
- Parents may be asked to sign a contract in conjunction with the child who has engaged in the bullying and/or harassment incident. Formal punishment may be set eg detention or grounding at school or at home as agreed by the relevant parties.

Action Plan 2

BULLYING INTERVENTION IN THE CURRICULUM

Teaching the anti-bullying message in the classroom

- The school social worker will be available to work with classes, small groups, or individuals who have been referred by a teacher or parent
- All teachers will cover aspects of bullying and social skill development in line with the health and pastoral care framework
- Regular classroom meetings are held and these can provide an avenue for children to address such incidents anonymously
- Incursions by professional anti-bullying groups such as “Bully Busters”
- Individual, group or classroom intervention may occur by the classroom teacher, school social worker or school psychologist in order further enhance the children’s assertiveness and resiliency skills
- Anonymous whole class student surveys about bullying may be conducted.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- In servicing will be undertaken by all staff when appropriate
- The social worker will undertake any further training if deemed appropriate, in order to update their skills in the area of bullying behaviour and its management
- The social worker will work closely with teachers to monitor bullying behaviour within the school environment and will conduct age appropriate classroom social skill training to students, or one on one counselling if required (eg: with perceived victims)

TEACHER RESOURCES

- Rigby, Ken. (1996) *Bullying in Schools & What to do about it*. Acer Publications VIC Australia.
- Frankel, Fred. (1996) *Good Friends are hard to Find: Help your child find, make and keep friends and also deal with teasing, bullying, meanness and stormy relationships*. Perspective Publishing USA. (Pgs 159 – 188)
- *Personal safety & Protective behaviours*. (1999) Children’s Protection Society VIC Australia. Various activities in Lesson plan for preps and Grades 1-2 & 5-6.
- McGrath, H. and Francey, S (1995) *Friendly Kids, Friendly Classrooms*
- Various articles / activities relating to prevention of bullying are available from the school social worker.

CHILD / PARENT RESPONSE SHEET

CHILD

What should I do if I witness a Bullying Incident?

If you witness someone being bullied, we hope you care enough to want to help. We all need to work together to stop Bullying and Harassment in our school.

You Should:

- Offer friendship and support to the person being bullied
- Encourage them to get help from an adult eg: parent, teacher or the school social worker or psychologist
- If possible, intervene while the bullying is happening by saying "Leave him/her alone" or "cut it out"
- Report the incident to a teacher as soon as possible
- Don't be afraid to come forward as you can speak private without your name having to be mentioned

PARENT

Parents, you can help by:

- Showing an interest in your child's school, social, sporting and cultural life
- Encouraging your child's self-esteem by saying and doing positive things
- Nurturing your child's positive qualities and valuing them for who they are
- Discussing the schools expectations about behaviour and how best to deal with bullying
- Inform the school if you become aware of any bullying incident so it can be stopped
- Please do not automatically assume that your child has the ability to stand up for themselves; this takes courage
- Make yourself aware of the bullying signs

Bully Busters (Source: ECU Child Health Promotion Unit)

Signs your child may be being bullied

- Reluctance to come to school
- Poorer work performance whilst at school
- Complaints of headaches or stomach-aches
- Wanting to be accompanied to and from school or go a different route
- Frequent damage or loss of possessions or money
- Coming home from school bruised, cut or hungry
- Trouble sleeping, bedwetting
- Unhappy, withdrawn, moody or irritable behaviour
- Social withdrawal, few friends

What should I do?

- React calmly and listen attentively
- Assure them bullying is wrong and they are not "dobbing" on anyone
- Help them decide what to do and who can help them
- Depending on the situation it may help to walk away, ignore the bully, make a joke, get help from friends or teachers or ask the bully to stop
- Build your child's self-esteem and encourage friendships
- Talk to the teacher or school social worker / psychologist

What if your child bullies other children?

- Discuss why they want to bully
- Help them to understand the effects on others
- Discourage bullying at home with siblings
- Be a good role model for your children by showing appropriate and acceptable behaviour.